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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 005507

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT -MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT
PARIS - TUESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

TODAY'S MAJOR INTERNATIONAL FRONT PAGE AND EDITORIAL STORY IS THE PULLOUT FROM GAZA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PEACE PROCESS BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND THE PALESTINIANS. FOR LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE, "THE HISTORIC PULLOUT HAS BEGUN." FOR LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION, WHICH HEADLINES "GAZA: TWENTY-FOUR HOURS FOR A PULLOUT" THE DEPARTURE OF THE ISRAELI SETTLERS IS TAKING PLACE "AMIDST TEARS." RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO HEADLINES: "A RESIGNED DEPARTURE." ARTICLES ABOUND ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE PULLOUT, WHILE EDITORIAL COMMENTARIES POINT TO THE "SYMBOLIC" NATURE OF THE PULLOUT (LIBERATION) AND THE NEED FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, NAMELY THE U.S. AND THE EU TO HELP IN THE POST-PULLOUT PHASE. IN WEEKLY L'EXPRESS EDITORIALIST BERNARD GUETTA TITLES HIS COLUMN "POST-GAZA."

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL STORY CONCERNS THE IRAQI CONSTITUTION. REPORTS NOTE THAT THE DEADLINE HAS BEEN POSTPONED FOR A WEEK AND ANALYZE THE THREE BONES OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE THREE COMMUNITIES: "FEDERALISM, THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN THE STATE AND HOW TO RE-DISTRIBUTE THE REVENUES FROM OIL." RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO CARRIES A MAJOR STORY ON WOMEN IN IRAQ, WHO ARE SEEN AS THE MAJOR LOSERS OF THE NEXT CONSTITUTION.

LE FIGARO CARRIES AN OP-ED BY HENRY KISSINGER, WHICH WAS INITIALLY PUBLISHED IN THE WASHINGTON POST LAST FRIDAY, COMPARING THE IRAQI SITUATION TO VIETNAM AND DRAWING LESSONS FOR AN EXIT STRATEGY.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT

"A HIGH-RISK WITHDRAWAL"

PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/16): "FOR ALL PARTIES, THE GAZA PULLOUT IS A HIGH-RISK ADVENTURE. WHILE ITS SUCCESS DOES NOT GUARANTEE PEACE, ITS FAILURE WILL CERTAINLY CARRY DIRE CONSEQUENCES. IN ISRAEL AS WELL AS AMONG THE PALESTINIANS, EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THESE ARE SERIOUS TIMES AND THAT THE CONDITIONS OF THE PULLOUT WILL DETERMINE THE FUTURE. FOR THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY THE CHALLENGE LIES IN CONTROLLING HAMAS: IF THE ISLAMISTS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION AND REVERT TO ATTACKS AGAINST ISRAEL, REPRISAL WILL BE IMMEDIATE. EGYPT ALSO HAS MUCH RIDING ON THE PULLOUT: EGYPT HAS BEEN PLAYING A DISCREET BUT MAJOR SECURITY ROLE AND DOES NOT WANT THE REGION TO FALL INTO CHAOS. AT THE BORDER TOWN OF RAFAH, PALESTINIANS AND EGYPTIANS WILL FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1967, BE FACE TO FACE, WITHOUT AN ISRAELI PRESENCE. THE PULLOUT WILL BE A SUCCESS ONLY IF IT GIVES THE PALESTINIANS HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE. THE U.S. AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST BE READY TO MAKE THE PULLOUT THE START OF A TRUE PEACE PROCESS RATHER THAN AN END IN ITSELF."

"A SYMBOL"

PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (08/16): "FOR THE SETTLERS, SHARON, WHO WAS ONCE THE ARCHANGEL OF JEWISH SETTLEMENTS, HAS BECOME THE HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE. THE PULLOUT DOES NOT GUARANTEE A RETURN TO THE ROADMAP. IT COULD EVEN SIGNIFY A DESIRE TO CONSOLIDATE A DE FACTO ANNEXATION OF THE WEST BANK AS WELL AS A REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PALESTINIANS ON THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM. THE PULLOUT REMAINS NEVERTHELESS A SYMBOL. FOR THE FIRST TIME, ISRAEL IS GIVING BACK FORMERLY COLONIZED LAND TO THE PALESTINIANS, GIVING THEM A CHANCE TO START THE PREMISES OF AN INDEPENDENT STATE. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE PULLOUT IS BEING HANDLED IS ALSO SYMBOLIC: IT EXEMPLIFIES THE VIRTUES OF THE DEMOCRACY THAT IS ISRAEL. FINALLY, THE PULLOUT STANDS AS A SYMBOL OF A VIABLE FUTURE THANKS TO THE MATURITY OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY IN HOW IT HAS CURBED ITS EXTREMISTS. WHILE SYMBOLIC, THE PULLOUT'S EFFECTS MUST NOT BE MINIMIZED. IN SPITE OF SHARON'S TACTICAL REASONS. A STEP HAS BEEN TAKEN. A STEP BACK WHICH MUST BE TRANSFORMED INTO A STEP FORWARD: THIS IS WHERE THE AMERICANS AND THE EUROPEANS ARE AWAITED SO THAT THE PULLOUT IS A STEP

TOWARDS PEACE."

"POST-GAZA"

BERNARD GUETTA IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY L'EXPRESS (08/16):
"COULD SHARON BE NAIVE? ISRAEL'S EXTREME RIGHT IS NOT TOTALLY
WRONG WHEN IT WARNS THAT THE PULLOUT FROM GAZA COULD LEAD TO
THE CONSOLIDATION OF A TERRORIST STRONGHOLD. NOT ONLY DO THE
ISLAMISTS REIGN HERE, THEY WILL BE TEMPTED TO PRESENT THE
PULLOUT AS A RESULT OF THEIR POLICY OF VIOLENCE. BETWEEN
WEAPONS AND RECONSTRUCTION, HAMAS WILL NOT HESITATE LONG. DOES
SHARON IGNORE THIS POSSIBLE OUTCOME? FAR FROM IT. NOT ONLY IS
HE NOT NAIVE, HE HAS INTEGRATED THIS POSSIBLE SCENARIO INTO
HIS STRATEGY: IF THE PALESTINIANS DO NOT CONTROL THEIR RADICAL
FRINGES, THEY WILL LOSE THEIR CREDIBILITY WITH THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. IF MAHMUD ABBAS MANAGES TO CONTROL
HAMAS AND VIOLENCE BECOMES A THING OF THE PAST, THEN THE
PALESTINIANS WILL HAVE TO ACCEPT THE PEACE OFFERED BY SHARON.
IN THEORY THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH THIS PLAN. BUT IN
PRACTICE IT IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR ABBAS TO CONTROL
HAMAS, AND EVEN IF HE WERE ABLE TO DO SO, ABBAS WOULD COME TO
THE NEGOTIATING TABLE IN SUCH A POSITION OF WEAKNESS THAT THE
OUTCOME WOULD BE FAILURE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT SHARON'S
INITIATIVE CANNOT LEAD TO PEACE. IT MEANS THAT IF THE U.S. AND
THE EU WANT TO HOLD ON TO THIS CHANCE FOR PEACE, THEY MUST
IMMEDIATELY MAKE ALL THE INTERNATIONAL AID TO THE PALESTINIANS
TRANSIT THROUGH ABBAS, GIVING HIM THE MEANS TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE IN GAZA, AND TO PROVE THAT MODERATION HAS ITS OWN
REWARDS." HOFMANN